



THE ROUNDHEADS

GEORGE RENTON-MALLOCH

CHARLES Augustus Everard John Maclachlan, Lord Wimple, heir to the House of Kilbagie, was strolling down the road with his hands in his pockets, a straw hat on the back of his head, and an air of profound boredom intended to convey to the world the contempt of an Eton man for the rustic solitudes which surrounded him. What was a man of thirteen to do in such a place? The problem was complicated for Charles Augustus by a sternly repressed desire to join in incredibly foolish pastimes of the Scottish rural youth, who at present, led by an impossible bounder named Cromwell Macgregor, son of the village schoolmaster, appeared to be obsessed by a passion for playing at soldiers. Cromwell Macgregor scarcely knew one end of a cricket bat from the other and had never played a game of tennis in his life: and most of his followers were in the same case. Yet one must do something, and those village kids did seem to get some fun out of their absurd games. But a man had to think of his dignity, and the heir of Kilbagie was on his way to the Wimple Glen, where the burn after pouring itself over a high fall ran between steep rocky banks on either side of a small boat-shaped island, known as the Green Island.

The Green Island was a delectable retreat. It was covered with bracken and wild raspberry canes and a dozen trees found root on it, providing a pleasant shade. There one could lie for hours lulled by the sound of falling water, reading forbidden books or smoking the paternal tobacco, secure from interruption. One could fish and one could cook at the campfire, and there was a choice of wigwams constructed of poles lashed together and covered with bracken. The sole approach consisted of a plank stretched over a moderately deep pool, fortified at the island end by a rampart of stones

and logs, of which fortification its constructor, young Rupert Blancapple, was absurdly proud. But Rupert was still a kid — only twelve. The one drawback to the Island was that it belonged to Rupert to whom it had been given by his father as a birthday present.

Thus meditating, Lord Wimple became aware of a figure seated on the stile which he was approaching. It was young Rupert, and young Rupert, like his friend, wore an aspect of profound gloom. His hands were thrust deep in his pockets, and his freckled face surmounted by a disreputable cricket cap was sunk upon his bosom. A bicycle lay at his feet. Lord Wimple surveyed him with an air of detachment.

"What's the grouch?" he asked with a yawn.

Young Rupert did not start or betray any sign of emotion at this unexpected address. He was well schooled in Fenimore Cooper and this summer was understudying the part of the Last of the Mohicans.

"It's that fellow Cromwell Macgregor," he replied. "Something ought to be done about him."

"What's his latest freak?"

"You know that half-crown he won off you at tossing?"

"I do," said Lord Wimple with some feeling.

"Well, he took a lot of kids from his father's school down to the barbers, and had their heads practically shaved, and got some wood and made swords for them, and now he's marching them about saying that they're Roundheads and that he's Cromwell."

"Incredible ass!" said the Etonian.

"Yes," pursued Rupert, "but he says that he has conquered the entire country and that Cavaliers like Wimple and Blancapple are afraid to meet him on the field of battle."

"Oh, does he?"

"Yes, and this morning he sent a keelie to me to say that he intends to reduce the last stronghold of the ill-fated Cavaliers by taking the Green Island. Said I'd better raise an army to defend it if I wanted to keep it."

At this moment a strange sound smote upon their ears, the sound of youthful voices raised in song.

"What on earth's that?" said Lord Wimple looking round in astonishment. "Sounds like a Presbyterian psalm."

"It is a psalm," said Rupert gloomily. "He makes his Roundheads sing psalms. They're coming this way."

And even as he spoke, round the bend of the road the Roundhead army appeared, marching in a dense column of twelve. All had close-cropped heads topped with paper helmets, and each man carried a wooden sword. They sang mournfully but with intense enjoyment. At the head of the column marched Cromwell Macgregor.

"Hullo, Macgregor — starting a circus, are you?" asked Lord Wimple, pretending to smother a yawn.

"Halt!" thundered Cromwell. The column halted so suddenly that some confusion arose owing to collision between the front and rear. Cromwell strode round it uttering sharp words of command and had it properly dressed before he vouchsafed any reply to the taunt. Then leaning on his sword and turning a gloomy countenance upon the two Cavaliers, he spoke.

"Ill-fated Charles, and you rash Rupert, we are marching to your doom. We are going to Marston Moor."

"You've a long way to go," said ill-fated Charles.

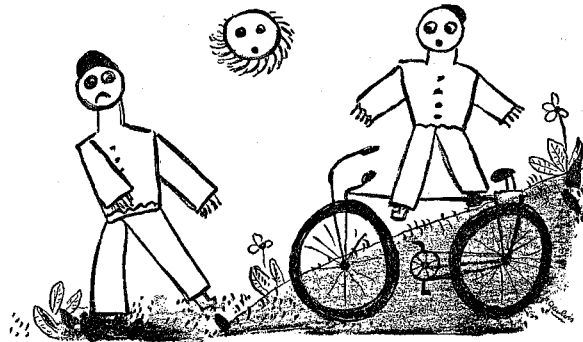
"Oh no, we haven't. It's in your Home Park. I am going to drill my Ironsides there to defy you."

"Infernal cheek! You mean you're taking these scarecrows up to Kilbagie?"

"I do. Perhaps that will rouse your craven spirits. If you don't want us there gather your forces and turn us out, that's all. March!"

And the column resumed its march and its doleful singing. Cromwell turned once to call out, "I'll stop there for an hour." And putting his fingers to his nose by way of farewell, he went on.

This last touch roused the sleeping spirit of the Kilbagies. Lord Wimple became a man of action.



"Dashed if I'll put up with that," he said. "Hop on to your bike, Rupert, and nip round to Doctor Brown's. Get Tom and Donald and any one else you can think of. Try the Manse, too, — young Duffie's game, I think."

Young Rupert obeyed with alacrity. He felt that it was time some one struck a blow for the Crown and the ancient aristocracy of Scotland. Lord Wimple so far forgot his dignity as to leap the stile and run by a short cut over the fields to Kilbagie.

The Lady Flora Maclachlan was feeding her two pet calves in the Home Park and gazing with mingled feelings of distaste and admiration at the manoeuvres of the Roundhead Army.

The calves, while enjoying the cabbage leaves with which the Lady Flora was regaling them, were inclined to vary the diet by an occasional nibble at the two plaits of golden hair which fell round their mistress's youthful shoulders, and while she was engaged in disentangling these ornaments from their mouths her ladyship did not notice the approach of the Lord Protector till he was at her side. But the proximity of so great a character did not inspire her with any fitting sense of reverence.

"Hullo, Cromwell. What have you brought all those horrid little boys up here for?" she asked pleasantly.

"These are my Ironsides," replied Cromwell. "There is war in the land."

"I hope you're not going to attack me!"

"Lady Flora," said Cromwell with an air of mournful dignity, "we do not make war upon women. Rest assured that you shall be safe from all harm during these unhappy conflicts, yea, even when that son of Belial, the ill-fated Charles, is brought to the dust."

Lady Flora was secretly pleased by this ceremonious form of address: the ill-fated Charles was in the habit of calling her Floppie. But womanlike she resolved not to show it too plainly.

"What's that piece of black plaster stuck on your nose?" she asked.

"That's my wart. Cromwell had a wart on his nose. This is the field of Marston Moor, and I have challenged your brother and that cuddy Blanecapple to muster their forces and fight us within the hour. Afterwards, we are going to storm the Green Island and keep it for the rest of the holidays."

"You're not going to go near our Green Island unless we give you permission," cried the lady indignantly. "I won't have all these wretched village boys messing about in our wigwams."

Cromwell smiled indulgently and thus sealed his doom. "Women were not meant to meddle with politics, Lady Flora. If Charles and Rupert don't funk it, the Battle of Marston Moor is about to take place."

"You'll be beaten, then!"

"We can't be. It's in the histories that Cromwell won. But look here, if you'll come for a walk with me, I'll send the army home."

This generous offer was scorned.

"I don't go for walks with people who have great black warts on their noses!"

Cromwell sighed. "Rash and misguided female," he said sternly, "then I must leave you to your fate."

And with these words he withdrew from the presence of a lady speechless with anger: none too soon, for at that moment the Cavalier army began to debouch from a neighboring shrubbery.

It was not an imposing force. What dignity and splendor it had lay in two of Lord Kilbagie's most cherished soft hats worn by the ill-fated Charles and young Rupert, from which drooped a couple of ostrich feathers abstracted from some unprotected wardrobe in the Castle. The rank and file comprised the Doctor's two boys, a couple of doughty sons of the Manse, and a few miscellaneous retainers gathered from the lodges. The force was armed with long and pliable willow wands, warranted to do



deadly execution on the legs of the foemen. But the unscrupulous Cromwell opposed a species of musketry to these sword-like weapons. He had drawn up his forces at the foot of an incline beside a spring, which provided an unlimited supply of balls of soft mud; and if you impale a ball of mud on the point of a wooden sword and swing the sword violently, the projectile will travel with surprising force and accuracy.

A great shout went up from the embattled Ironsides at the appearance of the foe. It was followed by some distressingly good shooting under which the enthusiasm of the Cavalier ranks began to waver perceptibly. Young Rupert besought the ill-fated Charles to lead them in a charge; but the cautious Monarch pointed out that they were hopelessly outnumbered.

"Strategy," he said, "is the only thing." And at that moment his eyes fell upon the two calves munching cabbage leaves. "Look after the army for a jiffy, Rupert, — I'll be back in a minute."

And he bolted for the shrubbery. The voice of Cromwell was heard shouting taunts about a craven king, and Rupert had some trouble in maintaining discipline. There were two opposing schools of thought in the Cavalier ranks, — those who had received a ball of mud on the face or down the neck were all for a charge and fisticuffs: those who had not, counseled a retreat.

The arguments died down on the reappearance of Lord Wimple bearing a couple of long poles at the ends of which were suspended a couple of Mr. Macsicar's best cabbages, secured from the kitchen garden while the worthy gardener was engaged elsewhere.

"I'll show you fellows how to deal with that rabble," he cried, and the words put new heart into his followers. "Floppie, we shall want the calves."

"You can't have them," said Floppie. "Poor Lily and Rose, — I won't have them hurt!"

But at that moment a stray shot landed with a splash upon the lady's frock. "Oh, all right," she said.

"You, Rupert, and you, Duffie, will mount these beasts and dangle the cabbages in front of their noses. That will make them trot. Take them right down on Cromwell, — fellows like that will never stand a cavalry charge. The infantry will follow you and complete the rout."

Every one but young Rupert and Duffie agreed that this was a

brilliant idea. However, after some persuasion not unpunctuated with threats, they mounted. Lily and Rose were a little restive at first, but after being allowed a nibble of the cabbages, they became calmer and showed a readiness to follow those vegetables. The whole force was then arranged in a semi-circle round the cavalry to prevent them from breaking away. Having given whispered instructions, which did not reach the ears of Rupert and his companion, to those immediately behind them, Lord Wimple gave the word to advance, and stepped aside.

The army began to move down the hill. "Aren't you going to lead them, Charles?" demanded the Lady Flora indignantly.

"No," said Charles, seating himself comfortably to view the combat. "I belong to the governing class. They'll get in a frightful mess down there. The Crown is above civil disputes, you know." And he gave all his attention to the inspiring scene before him.

Lily and Rose, finding that they could not reach the cabbages by walking towards them, began to trot. In this they were aided by the fact that they were descending a steep slope and by the application of willow wands to their hindquarters, in accordance with the secret instructions given by Charles. The result was that the pace of the whole body quickened, and it acquired an irresistible momentum which even the concentrated fire of the Ironsides could not affect in the least degree. Finally Lily and Rose, feeling that somehow they were being cheated, broke into a wild rush, and as they headed straight for the embattled Roundheads, young Rupert raised a wild cry of "A Rupert! A Rupert!" and seemed about to do dreadful execution with his cabbage; while Duffie, swinging helplessly from Rose's neck, presented an almost terrifying spectacle on account of his hobnailed boots.

All was over in a moment. The Ironsides did not wait to sustain



the impact of the cavalry, but casting down their weapons fled in all directions. Cromwell, finding himself abandoned, flung himself through a hedge. The only body left upon the field was that of Duffie, who found himself sitting in the spring, Rose having thoughtfully chosen a soft spot for him.

Having gathered the abandoned weapons of the enemy, the victors remounted the hill to receive the congratulations of Charles. And presently they saw the figure of Cromwell advancing with a white flag.

"Do you surrender?" inquired Charles.

"No. This is only a flag of truce, — I'm looking for my wart," said Cromwell. "Rupert's cabbage knocked it off. You look out for the Green Island when I've found it."

"But your army's just been routed," exclaimed young Rupert indignantly.

"Not at all," said Cromwell. "If you'd pay a little more attention to your history, you'd find out that it was only one wing of the Roundheads that was broken by Rupert's charge at Marston Moor. Cromwell remained on the field. I'm on the field and you've left it, so I've won." And before Charles or his courtiers could frame a suitable reply to this effrontery, Cromwell retrieved his wart from a clump of reeds and departed.

It says much for Cromwell's force of character and qualities as a leader of men that by four o'clock he had succeeded in rallying his fugitives and replacing the arms lost in the morning's disaster. As the Roundhead column, dispirited and perspiring, wound across the hot August fields there was some murmuring in the ranks; but their leader, an unconscious psychologist, relied upon their very discontent for the effect which he knew would be produced when they reached the edge of the Wimple Glen and looked down upon the idyllic peace and coolness of the Green Island. But he also relied upon the artillery which accompanied the army, having previously tested it with good effect upon some mutineers. He pointed out to the skeptical that the Cromwell of history had reduced many Scottish strongholds with a gun which accompanied his army. By his side staggered three Ironsides bearing a long and willowy plank which represented that renowned cannon, Mons Meg. When one end of this weapon was secured in the ground at a suitable angle, the other was bent backwards and a divot of

turf placed on it. The artillerymen then let go, the plank flew up, and the divot was flung through the air in catapult fashion, descending with considerable force upon the selected area.

It was indeed an idyllic picture that greeted the tired Roundheads as they debouched upon the low cliffs above the Wimple burn. Below them lay, like a green and shady paradise, the Green Island, with waters murmuring at either side. A fire crackled cheerfully, surmounted by a kettle suspended from two sticks. The place was garrisoned, but Cromwell's heart gave a leap when he realized the full fatuity of the Cavalier garrison. For although sentries had been placed, they were all asleep at their posts. The ill-fated Charles and young Rupert lay at full length with their plumed hats over their faces; the beautiful Lady Flora was curled up on a rug evidently as fast asleep as the others. And best of all, the drawbridge which connected the island with the mainland had not been taken in but remained in position unguarded.

"The Lord has delivered them into our hands," said Cromwell with great unction to his second in command, Johnny Macdougall, the carter's son. "There is nothing to do but walk over that plank."

"A wadna be too sure," said the cautious Macdougall. "Yon Wimple's got a heid on him, mind ye. Ye saw the way he got the better o'ye the morn."

But Cromwell did not wish to be reminded of that. Issuing a command for complete silence, he stole quietly down to the banks of the burn with a chosen storming party.

Cromwell was right in theory: logically speaking, there was nothing to do but walk across the drawbridge and surprise the sleeping garrison. But he had omitted to consider the human element which so often upsets logical calculations; a fact of which Macdougall was to give him many crude reminders in days to come. That son of Belial, the ill-fated Charles, had caused the bridge to be sawn half way through on the under side.

The storming party with drawn swords, headed by Cromwell, was half-way over when the plank parted with a rending sound, according to plan, and the Roundheads found themselves wallowing in the burn. The garrison sprang to life miraculously and lined the defenses with grinning faces.

"That was a nice sell for you, Cromwell, wasn't it?" said Charles

maliciously. For a moment Cromwell saw red: he forgot his army and his artillery, forgot everything but his burning desire to try conclusions personally with that idiot in the plumed hat. He splashed forward, got a footing on the island, and began to scale the rampart. Cromwell was a strong youth, and there was some trepidation among the Cavaliers as his head and shoulders appeared over the fortification. But it was then that the Lady Flora with singular heroism stooped down and scooping up some nice sticky mud deposited it with her own white hands full upon the close-cropped head of the Protector.

"You seem to want a crown, Cromwell," she said tartly. "Well, there's one for you!"

With a groan of anguish, Cromwell sank back into the stream. When he recovered a footing, he took advantage of his situation to cleanse his head.

"You wait till I get this mud out of my ears," he said, "and I'll turn Mons Meg on to you!"

"Now what on earth does he mean by that?" asked Charles of his officers.

"You'll soon see," shouted the retreating Cromwell. "It's artillery, that's what it is." And he scrambled back to the cliff top where his shaken army awaited him.

The triumph of the Cavaliers did not last very long. The engine of destruction was soon fixed in position in full sight of the garrison, who began to realize what was in store for them.

"Bright fellow, Cromwell," said Charles, as he disappeared into the strongest wigwam. "You fellows had better take cover. It doesn't matter about you, Floppie, even a Roundhead wouldn't fire shells at a lady."

"Coward!" said Floppie, unfurling a large umbrella as a means of protection.

The first shot flew right over the island and was greeted with jeers by the defenders. Cromwell made a slight adjustment of his plank and tried again. This time a large clod fell well and truly on one of the garrison. Another hit the campfire and scattered it among the dry grass, which began to smoulder. A third took the kettle.

"Aim for that umbrella!" commanded Cromwell.

"But that's her young leddyship," Macdougall remonstrated.

"I didn't hear you, Macdougall," said Cromwell. "My ears are still full of mud. Fire!"

And they fired, and the missile fell right through the umbrella. They heard a cry of "Cromwell, you brute!"

"Fire!" said Cromwell. After the second hit, the lady flung down the umbrella and went to consult with her brother Charles. She urged various considerations upon him, and her arguments were opportunely seconded by the partial collapse of the wigwam under the skilful shooting of the hostile artillery.

"Well," said the ill-fated Charles, "out of consideration for my unfortunate followers, perhaps. I say, the bracken's on fire, too!"

It was. Detailing some of the rank and file to stamp out the fire, Charles waved a white handkerchief at the end of a stick, keeping his person well concealed the while.

A shout of triumph went up from the enemy. Cromwell suspended fire and came down to the bank.

"Do you surrender?"

"Not at all," said Charles. "This is only a sort of armistice to prevent a useless massacre. And," he added as an afterthought, "because there is a woman in peril."

"Nothing doing," said Cromwell.

"Oh, all right then," sighed Charles. "Wait till I push out the plank."

Cromwell accompanied by a bodyguard entered the fortifications. The first thing his eye fell upon was the demurely submissive figure of the Lady Flora. His face grew dark.

"Take away that bauble!" he thundered to his terrified followers, who did not stir a finger.

"Oh, Cromwell, how brave and clever you are!" faltered the fair captive.

"You clapped a lot of mud on my hair," said Cromwell, not quite so firmly.

"But if I hadn't you would have captured the island single-handed," said the culprit, wide-eyed.

"Will you go for a walk with me?" demanded the Protector.

"For God's sake go with him, — if you don't you'll be sorry," whispered the ill-fated Charles, accompanying the request with a vicious pinch.

"Yes, I will, *now*," said the Lady Flora demurely. Charles now thought it time to take a hand.

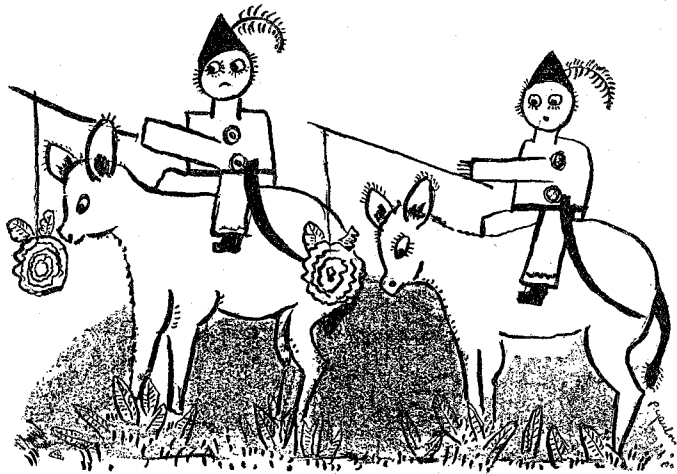
"Look here, Cromwell, the terms are that she goes for a walk with you and you leave the Green Island alone."

"All right," said Cromwell feebly. His followers, casting a look of scorn at him, made off to tell the main body how they had been betrayed and cheated of the fruits of victory.

"And you pay me back that half-crown you won at tossing."

"All right," repeated Cromwell.

"Then go and disband your army and come back to tea," said Charles graciously. And Cromwell went. His was a difficult task. He came back with a black eye and a bruised cheek which awakened the womanly concern of the Lady Flora, though Charles expressed no regret. But Cromwell felt, as he submitted to having his face bathed with an embroidered handkerchief, that he had won a greater victory than he had expected.



WHAT THE SAILORS READ

ANNE BOSWORTH GREENE

THE world, nowadays, is growing very keen on adult education. Almost everybody on land has a chance to better himself, to widen his horizon, pull up the range of his interests, and train his sense of values; but until quite recently no one, in this connection, seems to have thought of the sailor. When someone did, "the idea was mooted," writes an English educator, "not on the high seas, but in an Oxfordshire garden," where a college student happened to ask, "Why can't something be done for seamen?" These Englishmen at once held an enthusiastic week-end conference; for, in the face of the success of the Tutorial Classes, in England, — even among miners and quarrymen, who have shown themselves willing to settle down to real study after a day's work, — it seemed odd indeed that the sailor should have been overlooked. If a coal-miner has this thirst for education, why not a seaman? The seaman has far fewer amusements, fewer ways of spending his free hours than the land worker; the result being that he is chiefly concerned in killing time. "Some knit, or carve wood; one man bought an old sewing-machine and converted it first into a fretwork machine, then into a pencil sharpener, then into a tobacco-chopper, and finally into a mousetrap."

Once you are "fed up" with it, indeed, there is no blanker, homesicker place than a ship, — especially if you live down in its dusky lower regions; and the various seaman's representatives at the week-end conference agreed as to a "real, though latent, demand for education" among those who make their livelihood from the sea. For as Collingwood, the great seaman, wrote in a letter to his wife, as far back as June, 1806, about his shipmates: "How it would enlarge their minds if they should acquire a sufficient knowledge . . . to give them an idea of the beauty and wonders of the creation! . . . Whenever they have that, nothing on this side the moon will give them much uneasiness of mind."

Bright visions, these; but the project was not an easy one to get started. The "pain of a new idea" had everywhere to be overcome; ship-owners had to be persuaded and won over. Their